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HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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REASON IN RELIGION.

“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even these who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”—
Heb. v. 12-14.

This is a chiding. It is a chiding for want of intelligence. It is a reproach for an indolent use, or rather for the disuse, of reason in the province of duty. The sacred Scripture stands almost alone as a book of religious directions in exhorting to a full, free and constant use of the reason. From beginning to end, it takes for granted that man is a reasonable creature, to be dealt with by motives intelligently presented. Men are best dealt with by an appeal to their reasoning faculties; and in consequence, the Word of God is constructed substantially upon that plan. It addresses the reason primarily. It challenges men to examine the different commands by the light of reason. Some have thought that the question of the apostle, “Who art thou that repliest against God?” was a dissuasion from meddling with the human understanding in things divine. If it be, it stands solitary in the Word of God. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.” Throughout the Old and New Testaments there are inducements and persuasions of every kind to the examination of God’s commands; and it is declared that they are reasonable; that they are right, just, true, good. Everywhere throughout the Word of God are provocatives to the fullest and largest use of our understanding in judging of things fit or unfit, right or wrong, true or false. So that it may be said that the Word of God is constructed upon the very principle of exciting men to the use of their reasoning faculties.

On the other hand, dullness, and stupidity, and indifference, and that simplicity which indicates want of culture and ignorance, are

made criminal. Men are reproached, blamed, for them. And one of the effects which may be expected from the soul's being touched by the Divine Spirit is that it will mount up into a higher realm of intelligence. In no instance that I remember is there a command which should lead men to lean on others for their knowledge. Certainly, there is nothing like a servile acceptance of imposed conclusions recommended in the Word of God.

Nor is it anywhere authoritatively hinted at, or clearly stated, that God has reposed his truths in the keeping of any body of men from whom their fellow-men are to receive them implicitly and unthinkingly. Not even from himself are we to take, unchallenged and unexamined, the truths which are fundamental to our character and our lives; and still less are we commanded to take them at the hands of the Church, or of any priestly body whatever.

In so far as reason is concerned, the Word of God is a grand encourager of the supreme use of the understanding of men, both in things secular and in things spiritual and divine. So far from our reason being limited by authority in any arbitrary body, it is made to be the duty of each individual to think, to judge, to choose, to be vital. Not that men should do it without help; not that men who are combined for the pursuit of truth are to be treated with disrespect; not that there are not many presumptions that men who betake themselves to any line of thought will be more likely to be right than those who do not; but whatever help we may gain from precedent, from authority, from men of any profession, it is the duty of every individual man to weigh, to judge, "to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good."

The Word of God is an enlightener; and wherever it has been a free Bible, wherever it has been generally read, and wherever its influence has really entered into the lives and hearts of men, there intelligence has prevailed, and there the human understanding has unfolded its best works, and developed its best efforts. So that the Word of God is not a tyrant book. It imposes no manacles and no restraints, except those which belong to the nature of the human mind, and the nature of the subjects which the human mind is called to investigate.

When, therefore, the hierarchical churches cast disesteem upon the human reason, and reproach those who lean to their own understanding, as if the declarations of the Old Testament were to have literal application, they depart from the genius and the spirit of the Word of God. And yet, the Protestant spirit is liable to go to the other extreme. The reason is not infallible any more than the Pope or the Church. Men have cast down the hierarchies, and re-

fused to accept them, questioning their edicts. Men have denied the right of any class to think for them. They have gone almost to the extent of idolizing the reason. There are a great many kinds of idols in the world: there are those that are made of sticks, and stones, and clay, and precious metals; and then there are churches that are idols; and there are creeds that are made to be idols; and there is such a thing as idolizing the Bible itself—which is the idol of many and many a Protestant; and the reason is the idol of still others. In many instances, the Roman tendency, and the modern free-thinking tendency, stand at the opposite extremes—both of them alike in error; for the human reason is neither so acute, nor so comprehensive, nor so sure in its deductions as men think. It is not any safer in many instances, and in some not so safe, as an authority, as custom or experience. In ten thousand ways men are obliged to do that which they scoff at and scorn the hierarchy for doing or enjoining. Do I do all the thinking which leads to the things that I believe in? I believe in the whole system of mathematics, whether abstract or applied; but have I thought it all out? I never have, and thank God I never shall! It is not for me to think out the great system of astronomy in order to believe the astronomical truths of my time. I accept them at the hands of the Church of Astronomers. It is not for me to go through all the earth and explore geographical facts, in order to believe them. I accept them at the hands of the professional explorers. I trust them for the truth of these things. It is not for me to unbed the customs which stud society all over, and run back to its real facts, in order to believe in its philosophy. It is enough for me to know the average experience of society, upon which these customs are based. I take them as they have been handed down to me. It is not for me to undertake to traverse or analyze the reasons of art. I take from artists the great canons of truth in that department, because I believe that they have found them out. I trust to their authority in such matters. And when you come to look into affairs in general, there is no man who is not constantly pinning his faith on the sleeve of some other men for knowledge—and that in the very sphere to which his avocation confines him. Everybody, in some directions is doing that which we abuse the Roman Catholic for doing in religion; he is not so far wrong after all, in spots. The grocer in many parts of his business acts on hearsay. He goes according to other men's judgments and thinkings. The Surgeon and the Physician are perpetually doing it. The Lawyer lives upon precedents. The Astronomer is always receiving truths from others. He gives them more or less examination; and yet, in the main, he

takes them on trust. There is no sphere of human life in which a man stands where he is not the centre of innumerable rays of light which come in upon him; and he takes them without analysis. It is not in the power of a man to give independent and personal investigation to them all, so as to know them of himself.

If, therefore, to follow out every line of truth with one's own individual reasonings and deductions were a necessity of intelligent conviction, men could believe but a few things. It is not in our power in this life to master many subjects. There is only time enough for one to think about a limited number. It transcends the power of men to cover much ground by investigation in this world.

So, then, there are both of these principles at work. It is indispensably necessary that men should think, and that they should think for themselves. It is necessary, in repeated instances, that they should make their own deductions and conclusions, and follow in the lines of conduct which flow from them. But on the other hand, men cannot, in all things, think for themselves. It is right, it is wise, it is reasonable, to accept the thoughts of others. We give and take. In one place a man thinks for you, and in another place you think for him. There is this interchange of knowledge on the great principle of the faith of man in man. We trust each other's thinkings. And yet there is, over all this faith and trust, an investigating tendency; a thoughtfulness; a right to stop every conclusion, and question it, and oblige it to show its passport and prove its origin.

Both of these tendencies are at work. We teach men; but they are left independent and free to think. Other men teach us; but we are independent and free to think. In certain lines, we take the results of each other's thinkings; but not without the right of questioning them.

When, therefore, men insist upon it that to be in the full exercise of reason one must throw off the past, and lift up his head into an independent sphere, where no man before has been, and think out all things, to him may be applied the words of the proverb:

"Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him."

Not philosophy, but folly inheres there.

Let us look a little, then, at the elements and the proofs of that reason which men talk so much about, and know so little of.

First and lowest, is that which we possess with the whole range of the lower animals—perceptive reason—that part of the human

understanding which takes cognizance of physical facts and events that are exterior to ourselves; which perceives the existence of things, and their various qualities; which recognizes whatever belongs to the framework or physical structure of the globe.

There is evidence that we possess this phase of reason in connection with the lower creation. In many respects they have sharper senses than we have. The eagle and the vulture can see a thousand-fold more accurately and distantly than we can. The hound has a sense of smell which interprets things to him as no sense of smell ever interprets things to men. There is a sense of touch possessed by many animals which is finer and more authoritative than any sense of touch which is committed to us. But no animal has an average so high, and of so many senses, extending over such a large radius of the physical world as man.

Where the results of observation are brought together in certain affiliations, we have what we call the realm of sensuous, physical science, which is dependent mainly on the quality of perceiving.

Now, if any man supposes that there is certainty in this realm, he has given very little consideration to it. Men say, "Do you not believe the sight of your own eyes"? I have nothing better, I admit, by which to see things. A man's hearing is the best thing he has for that side of truth which is taken in through the ear. His sense of smell, his sense of taste, and his sense of touch—they are the best instruments which he has for perceiving particular phases of truth. But are these instruments so perfect that men may rely upon them implicitly? No. Every court of justice shows that the same event, being looked at by two, by four, by six different men, is not, although they are honest, and mean to state the truth, seen by any two of them alike. The sense of seeing in each one acts imperfectly, and each sees differently from the others, and makes a different report from theirs. Men think that they see things with absolute accuracy; but experience has taught the scientist that one observation is not enough—that a score of observations are necessary in order to correct the fallibility of the sense of seeing.

The same is true of the sense of hearing. Men do not hear half that there is going on, to begin with. Let the leader of a choir or a band hear a semi-tone of discord, and his ear will detect it instantly. Mine does not. The great rush of sound I hear; I take in certain great effects that are produced; but all that fine analysis by which the ear, under suitable training, detects the slightest shade or element—that I am deficient in. That belongs only to the musician, and comes only by education.

Hearing is not very accurate as between one man and another. In some it is far better than in others. It is not very accurate as between one period of a man's life and another. Different statements are given where men listen carefully and report truly what they have heard.

The same is true in respect to the sense of touch. The five senses, with the perceptive intellect back of them, are alike in this respect. The sense of color, the sense of shape, the sense of quality, all the senses, when you apply the test to them, and measure their accuracy, are found to be very unreliable. Nothing is more inaccurate than the reports of a man's perceptive intellect. And yet, with what arrogance do men speak of it! It answers the common purposes of society; but not without falling into innumerable errors which need to be corrected.

When a young physiologist came with great zeal to Cuvier, and said that he had discovered a new muscle in the frog, the old naturalist waived him off kindly, and said, "Come to me again in ten years." He never came. Farther investigation proved to him that he had not found a new muscle.

Every school of natural history, every school of physics, in the broadest domain, knows perfectly well that the senses need to be trained, and that there are very few men whose knowledge of the senses can be relied upon. The genius of knowing even the lowest form of truth is a rare genius; and in respect to the great mass of men the senses are fallible. Though they answer a certain rough use of life, and afford a basis for general confidence, yet, after all, when the question is one of exactitude, there is nothing less to be trusted than the senses, until they have been trained. And there are not many men who are capable of being trained so that their senses shall be irreproachable.

This is one of the grounds and signs of the skepticism of science. Men who are scientific investigators apply to truth the tests of physical investigation. They perceive the mistakes which are made by others and themselves, and they come to have a realizing sense, as the old ministers used to say, of the fallibility of man's perceptive reason. When they hear a man reasoning from the Bible, and forming judgments and drawing deductions therefrom, they hold these judgments and deductions in suspicion, and say, "That man is not using his understanding accurately." If you go still higher, to the reflective reason, it is that which recognizes the relations of things to the relations of truths. All truths are in their abstract forms subjective. They belong to you. They spring out of your inner consciousness. All things are mainly external to you; but

the reflective reason recognizes the results of matter in its own sphere, and also the results of states of mind, and of all that belongs to human consciousness and human faculty and human power. Ordinarily we call the use of this reason *philosophy*. Where it exists in certain forms, and considers everything in the most abstract way, we call it *metaphysics*.

Now, when we look at the reliableness of this superior reason, has it proved to be a safe ground for trust? For I know not how many hundreds and thousands of years men have been heaping up system after system; and the chief object of each succeeding philosophy or theory has been to show that the one which preceded it was false in the higher realm of the philosophical intellect. Men have been for ages reasoning, drilling, training, accumulating; and after all, the consciousness of mankind is that the reflective reason, while it has vast advantages, while it supplies a human want and a human necessity, is as far from being infallible as anything can be. No man can afford to lean his whole weight upon it without suspicion, without test, without trial. It partakes of the fallibility of human nature.

Nor does it follow, because a great many different minds, in different directions, come together on a truth, that it is more true than it would otherwise be. Whole generations have believed together, and a new generation has, by new methods of investigation, upset their belief. There have been times when the whole drift of the world was in certain directions; and they were always followed by new developments; and speedily the current turned right round and flowed the other way—showing that while men individually have been fallible in their reflective reason, they have likewise been so collectively. The thinking of masses of men in a given direction does not necessarily authenticate any truth. The fact that things have been accepted from the days of the patriarchs may create a presumption or probability that they are true, but it is not absolute evidence of their truth; for many things have been believed from the days of the patriarchs that have proved not to be true, and been taken out of the category of truths.

When, then, you come to judge of the action of the understandings of men—their perceptive reason and their reflective reason—you will find that though they have practical serviceableness, they are so crude, so untrained, and so disturbed by the emotions of the mind, that they are not infallible, nor absolute, nor to be depended upon.

There is another sphere of the reason—that one in which truths are apprehended in their social and moral relations. We come into

the knowledge of truths of fact and matter by the mediation of our senses; but there is a higher realm than that of fact and matter. There is an invisible realm where emotion, where sentiment, where spirituality reside. We come into communion with that realm by the understanding, through the mediation of our personal emotions and feelings. I will illustrate it.

I do not suppose that to a butterfly there is any thought of beauty; but it is itself beautiful. I think that there is not in the animal creation—except possibly in a few of the more highly organized animals—any considerable sense of beauty. But the heaven is beautiful, and the earth is beautiful.

There are a great many men who, in this respect, are like the animal kingdom—men of strong reasoning power; men of sharp observing power; men of great power of creativeness; men who know how to turn ideas into things, and yet apparently have no sense of that subtle element which pervades the atmosphere, which influences human conduct, and which is, as it would seem, a letting down of one of the greatest attributes of God on earth—the sense of things beautiful. Man does not perceive this. What is the matter?

Take a little air, or strain, which an organist may give you. It shall be some familiar tune, like Dundee, or some old carol. Let him, by-and-by, after playing it on one or two small stops, introduce another stop—a hautbois or a wood-flute, for instance; and you will see that while the air remains, there is a new quality in it. Let him introduce another stop, and another; and you will see that it is still the same melody and harmony, but that something additional has gone into it; that it is richer, sweeter, stronger. We have not language to follow these subtle things very far.

Now, it is so with the human mind. The intellect is looking at things; and if all the emotions were shut off, and were not allowed to color them, how barren, how unrich they would be! But you draw one emotion, and instantly the things perceived through the intellect are affected by that emotion. As in playing a tune, every additional stop that is introduced adds a new quality to the sound, so the understanding is modified, changed, enriched, by this or that emotion which is let on.

When the intellect is thus electrified, magnetized, polarized, it comes to a recognition of the greater truths of affection and sentiment. For instance, a man who is absolutely without love for children or pets will sit in a nursery where children are playing, without any sort of feeling; but put me where those children are, and I am asparkle all over, because I love children. The moment

my perceptive reason and my reflective reason are shot through with the magnetism of this emotion of love for children, I become competent to perceive thoughts and feelings and relations which I never could have perceived by any ordinary process of thinking. It is the thinking power, waked up and acting through the color of an emotion, that brings one into relation to the truths which belong to that emotion.

Take a man who has no conscience naturally (it would not be difficult to find such men!), and let him stand in the midst of actions and presentations, whatever they are, and he will perceive no sense of equity; he will have no fine appreciation of honor, no intense feeling of what is right or wrong; he will be entirely without any such emotion; but others, standing right by him, and highly constituted in their moral nature, will be sensible to what is right, and true, and noble, and just. In other words, where emotion is absent from a man, his understanding cannot know or comprehend certain feelings which belong to emotion; but where emotion is present in a man, it unites with his understanding, and enables him to take in these feelings. The feeling of conscience joining itself to the reason, to the understanding, enables it to perceive those things which belong to the realm of conscience. The understanding is always the knowing part; but what it knows depends on what it has before it, or behind it, or within it.

Take the emotion of ideality, which we call imagination, fancy, aspiration, yearning, and what not. Where that joins itself to the understanding, it makes the orator, the poet, the mystic, the dreamer. It makes men that see truths in regions where they do not outwardly appear. In all such cases the understanding is magnetized by that feeling which brings them in relation to things invisible—to superior truths. Throughout the world, the sentiment of benevolence, the sentiment of hope, the sentiment of faith, the sentiment of conscience, the sentiment of love, bring us into relation to spheres of truth which are infinite, divine, transcendent.

When, then, you come to look at what are called moral intuitions in men, what are they but results of such a highly organized, sensitive state of mind, that feeling, flashing upon the understanding, brings into the form of knowledge or perception all the truths that belong to the emotion which has colored, or magnetized, or polarized the understanding?

Now, in this realm, what style and degree of certainty is there? I think, generally speaking, it may be said that those intuitions which are against nature—using *nature* in a qualified sense—are

more apt to be true that those which are with nature. In other words, the spontaneous feelings which a man has in the direction of the animal sphere—anger, pride, cruelty, and the like—are, generally speaking, more erroneous than those intuitions which go out toward the generous, the noble, the pure, the self-denying. It is more natural for a man to act with those immense swells of feeling which work toward the animal, than to act with those emotions which work toward the spiritual, and yet in that direction he most often acts wrongly. It is only by long practice with reason and feeling that we have learned to discern the right from the wrong—the good from the bad. It requires education—that is to say, the introduction of the element of habit upon this joint action of the reason and the emotions—to enable us to make just moral distinctions. Men require the sharpening of drill before they can discern what is high; what is right; what is symmetrical; what is beautiful—before they can discern any of those noble qualities which belong to them, and which are implied in the terms *civilization* and *spirituality*. These are all reached through an imperfect medium. Emotion and reason, working together on a higher plane, are transcendently valuable; but they are far from being infallible. They are full of faults and mistakes.

So far, then, as to the fallibility of men's reason.

It would seem, at first thought, in looking over this subject, as though there was a strong argument in favor of having the Church think for men, and tell them what is right and what is wrong; but there is always this fallacy: that where the Church thinks out a truth, and tells it to me, I have to think of it before I can understand it. I meet the same liabilities to error in accepting from the Church what it says as infallible, that I do in the exercise of my own thought independent of the Church. The very act of receiving truths from other persons or from bodies of persons, is attended with as many risks as the act of searching for truths unaided by others. I am liable in accepting what comes to me from others, to no less limitations and mistakes than I would be if I went forth and gathered my own materials and made my own deductions.

Moreover, we have had the experience of ages, which shows us that the truths which are handed down to us by corporate bodies are not any more true than those which are developed by our own individual experiences.

Take the household. The father and the mother can think for the children until they are fifteen, or eighteen, or twenty years of age; but then they must think for themselves. Why? Because no child is like its father and mother. All truth is relative to the

person by whom it is applied. Every man has his specialty which renders it impossible for him to take the shape, the color, the proportions, the exact elements of discrimination, which belong to the mind of any other person. No two persons ever agree. No two persons ever see alike, or hear alike, or feel alike, or think alike.

I have a kaleidoscope at home (just now that is the plaything), and in turning it round probably five hundred times, and causing thousands of combinations, I have never seen two combinations in it that were alike. There are just so many (twenty or thirty) pieces of glass in it; and the sphere is very small in which they they work; and yet, the combinations are never repeated, are never reproduced. I do not know as they would be if I were to turn the kaleidoscope five hundred years. Although there are only twenty or thirty of these bits of glass, there is always some little difference in the combinations which they form, and which report themselves to the eye.

If that be so in respect to twenty or thirty little bits of glass, which maintain their own individual forms, and can only change in their relative positions, what a kaleidoscope the human mind must be, that has thirty or forty feelings, which are never the same, which are always changing in quality and intensity, and each of which forms endless combinations with the others! A vast, voluminous, intricate, changing thing, in its outworking, would the human mind seem to us to be if we had an eye of divinity by which we could give form to all the thoughts and feelings of men as they flow out. No two men think like each other; and no man thinks like himself in any two consecutive moments.

When, therefore, bodies of men attempt to impose their views on their fellow-men, they act contrary to the nature of the mind, and contrary to the experience of mankind. Views so imposed cannot be helpful or profitable. No wise man will ever reject or neglect the results which have been arrived at by any other wise man, or any body of wise men; he will always look with great respect, and with a recognition of the presumption of their truth, on things which have come down through long periods, and which have approved themselves to generations of men; but no certainty attaches to them. We cannot afford to take them as absolute. There is nothing infallible but God; and he is hid.

When, therefore, it is proposed that this limitation, this fallibility, of the human mind shall be remedied by some authoritative tribunal, that tribunal itself is subject to all the liabilities to error which the individual is who accepts its dictum.

Then next, let me speak of the arrogance of those who are

throwing aside, or attempting to disesteem, or to disown, all the deductions of the spiritual sense; all the results of the action of the upper understanding. Look at the scientific tendency by which men would bring everything down to the sphere of the perceptive reason. There are many honorable exceptions. I do not say that it is the tendency of the professors themselves to overvalue the accuracy of scientific investigation. The fallibility of the lower forms of physical reason, or of that which tends to physics, should teach men the fallibility, also, of the higher faculties of mankind.

When, therefore, men disown morality, or its foundation, sociology, or its great elemental foundation; spirituality, with all its experiences, on the ground that they do not come within the purview and investigatory power of the lower reason, it seems to me that they act in the most incomprehensibly unphilosophic manner. Shall I disown the sounds that fill the air, because, applying my eye to them, I cannot see them? Shall I disown all odors, because, putting my ear to the flower, I cannot smell them? Shall men disown truths, because they cannot taste them, when they are discoverable only through the joint action of passion or affection or spiritual emotion, and the higher understanding? Shall men apply the crucible, or the mathematical rule, or any outward measure, to things that, if perceived at all, must be perceived through the channel of higher thoughts and feelings, and disown them because they cannot stand the test of the lower reason? The lower reason has its tests, the superior unspiritualized reason has its tests, and the spiritualized reason has its tests; and each must rest on its own ground.

It is arrogance, then, even if it be maintained in silence, to suppose that all the great truths of spiritual Christianity are to be rejected, or held in doubt, because they refuse to submit themselves to the test of scientific reason. There is a higher realm than that in which the senses bear sway; and the lower court cannot control the higher. The justice of the peace may appeal up to the judge, but the judge never appeals down to the justice. And the higher reason is unjudged by the lower, though it judges the lower.

One other point. In view of the carefulness required in the investigation of truth; in view of the time and training and discipline that are required; in view of the nature of the mind, and the skill required to judge of its actions rightly, I say to all those who are speaking lightly of the faith of their fathers, and of the manners and customs of their childhood; I say to all those who, without any special knowledge, are talking of progress and emancipation, and of the glorious era of reason; I say to all those

who are curveting in physical philosophy, as against the higher modes of arriving at the truth, "You are going too fast and too far. No man is wise who leaves his head behind him; and you are traveling faster than your brain can go."

To bring new thought to the balancing of truth; to put thoughts to thoughts, and to make them march in ranks and train together to form systematic facts and co-operating truths—this is a slow, a cautious, and a difficult process. Not one in a hundred can reach the higher forms of truth without having been schooled. You would not think of judging of painting without having studied the art. You would not think of judging of the operations in an astronomical observatory without having thoroughly investigated those operations. And yet, men take the old Bible, and sling it behind them, and say, "This may have been good enough for my father and mother, but it will not answer my purpose. I am going to read scientific facts. I am going to find out what is true in other directions. I am not going to be held down by those superstitions, those old women's fables, those fantastic notions. I am going to be emancipated from everything of that sort." If you come to that result by the action of your nobler nature in its best condition, I admit that it is legitimate; but if, when you have scarcely been born into the light; if, while you are raw and untrained; if, with no more thought on the subject than you can give to it in walking from your house to the ferry; if, without seeking for knowledge as a hid treasure; if, without scales, or measures, or alembics, inside, or outside, or anywhere, you rush into those themes which embrace infinity and eternity, which cover the whole destiny of man, which relate to the condition of States, the foundations of households, and the economy of industrial life—everything that concerns us here and hereafter—and undertake to settle all these matters by scientific generalizations, you are a fool—with my compliments! And how many persons you will find who do these very things! How many there are who refuse to go to church, as their fathers did! How many say, Let those who will take their grandmother's spectacles and read that old Book; but as for me, I have been born the forerunner of a new sphere, and of new times!"

You must equilibrate in this matter; you must take things that men believed in the past; you must trust the conclusions of men who have gone before you; but you may carefully think, and conscientiously reason to test the ultimate truth of those convictions. You cannot rise to a high and honorable place in business life, or civil life, or political life, except by those stepping-stones

which were squared and laid down by the industry of those who have preceded you. Knowledge, virtue, morality, spirituality, manhood, can only be acquired by long effort and practice.

Men gradually find new elements of truth, or larger proportions of old truths. Be willing to receive new light; but until you have something substantial and clear as crystal to take the place of the old, hold on to what you already have. Nothing is so bad as for a man to be afloat. Nothing is so bad as for a man to lose faith in everything.

Put in a skiff, in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, a babe that knows neither the stars, nor the sea, nor storms, nor sail, nor compass, nor rudder, and what such a child is, that is the young man who drifts through life, contemning all faith, all knowledge of the past, yet without having acquired any knowledge of the present, or gained any intuitions of the future.

"Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope for a fool than of him."

Prove all things; but, as a condition of doing it, and after you have done it, hold fast to that which is good.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

WE are not afraid to draw near to Thee, O thou Holy One. We are not afraid of thy justice, nor of thy wrath. For, though we know that thine hand is against evil, we know that thy heart is toward the children of men, even in their degraded condition. It is thy will that they shall be drawn up by the power of thine intelligence, and of thy holiness, and of thy goodness, until they shall see thee as thou art, and feel thy presence, and be transformed into thine image. We are far from thee, but thou hast pushed us away, that our journey may be toward thee. Though we are unlike thee; though thou art not of a form like ours; though thou art not bound to the clay as we are, yet, inwardly, we believe that thou hast given us the beginnings of divine thought and feeling, and that thou wilt shape us into the image of thyself. We draw near to thee this morning, knowing our weakness, our want, our ignorance, and our transgression, in that limited sphere where we know what is right and what is wrong. We draw near to obtain thy help; to experience thy compassion; to be warmed by thy love; to be formed by thy power, which works perpetually in the hearts of those who will.

Enter, O Divine Spirit, into our souls, with light, and warmth, and life, and love, and joy; and may we be able, this morning, in entertaining thee, to cast out all rivals; to lay aside everything which offends thee. Speak to us as thou didst of old to thy disciples, Peace be with you; and may all turbulent passions, and all sensuous appetites, and all unsatisfied and wearisome longings, and all burdensome doubts, and all trying memories, and all blinding clouds, and all things which disturb the calm of our settled peace, depart from thy presence; and may we dwell with thee, this morning, in that restfulness and in that childlike confidence which shall make us supremely happy in the Lord.

We desire, O Lord, to confess thy great goodness, and our unworthiness of it. We look back to the way in which we have been led to admire thee, and upon the rod and the chastisement which have been laid upon us; and we see that they have been blessings; and we commit ourselves again unknowing, but confiding, to that hand which hath guided us thus far. All that we have we commit to thee. Thou art sovereign. Thy thoughts never forsake the earth, but are always abroad. Evermore the Watchman, thou art, of Israel, that slumberest not nor sleepest. Thou hast all power, and thou hast all goodness. We commit ourselves to thy thought, and thy purpose, and thy power, and desire to find peace in the perfect submission of ourselves to thee.

We pray that thou wilt deliver us, in the various spheres in which our life is cast, from untruthfulness; from unfaith; from temptations which are stronger than our resisting power. Deliver us from all evil, and give to us, day by day, such intimations of thy presence and of thy complacency as shall fill our horizon with light, that we may call ourselves the children of light—the sons of God.

We pray that thou wilt bless all who are in thy presence according as thou seest that they need in their special wants and in their personal necessities. Be to every one a present help. Grant abundantly outward blessings to those who have inward strength; and grant inward strength to those who are surrounded by outward tokens of thy goodness. Be to all that which they need; not that which they plead for in their ignorance, but that which thou, in thy wisdom, seest to be best for them.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all those who are laboring in their respective spheres to build up the kingdom of God in this world and in the great world beyond. Oh, may they be wise! May

they themselves be enlightened. May they not be weary in well-doing, for in due season they shall reap if they faint not.

Bless our Sabbath-schools, and all that teach and all that are taught in them. We pray that the army of children that are growing up in our midst may grow up better men than we have been; with a larger thought of the work of God in this world; and with a better and earlier consecration thereto.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to all those who go forth to-day on missions of mercy to the imprisoned, to the sick, and to the wandering. May they go in the spirit of the Master; and may they find that it is not in vain that they carry out the merciful dispensations of the Gospel among their fellow-men.

We pray for the reformation of those who are given to vice and to crime. We pray for more virtue and wisdom in our laws and in our institutions. Wilt thou increase, we pray thee, the restoring power of thy truth in the midst of men. We pray that thou wilt bless all who teach in every sphere of learning. Remember all those who are teaching in our common schools; all those who are teaching in obscure and destitute places; and all those who, with pains and self-denial, devote themselves to the good of the young.

We pray for schools for those who but lately were in bondage and darkness; for schools in far distant settlements where ignorance prevails.

May all seminaries of learning come up in remembrance before thee, and be greatly blessed of God.

We pray that thy kingdom may come, and that thy will may be done throughout the whole world. Unite the nations together in a common desire for peace. May that love of blood and of segregation, and may that spirit of avarice and of combativeness, which have desolated the world so long, at last be restrained; and may the spirit of intelligence, and of humanity, and of love come in the place of these disastrous evils. We pray that thy Church may everywhere spread, and purify the nations of the earth. May the day speedily come when, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, men shall know and love the Lord.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we beseech of thee that thou wilt bless the word which has been spoken. May it excite in us thoughtfulness and caution. May it produce virtue in every one of us, restraining the arrogance of our pride, and stimulating the dullness of our understanding. May we be more and more curious of the things which thou hast hid on every side to tempt our knowledge. May we study to know thy truth. So may we grow in grace, that we may grow in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We ask it in his adored name. And to him, with the Father and the Spirit, shall be the praise, evermore. *Amen.*

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